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PSC 395.02: The Causes of War

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University of Montana—Political Science Department
Political Science 395: The Causes of War
Spring Semester 1995

Professor Martin E. Weinstein

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Office Hours: Monday 2-4 & Wednesday 10—12 or by appointment

Political Science 395 is an advanced colloquium on "The Causes of War", which was the root of the study of international relations as an academic field in the United States, and which continues to be a major point of focus in the study and practice of international politics. The main purpose of this colloquium is to clarify the definitional and philosophical problems which have beset the search for the causes (and the prevention) of war.

The colloquium will pursue this end by addressing itself firstly to the definitions of causation. What constitutes a cause—effect relationship? When we say C is the cause of E, what do we mean? Secondly, the colloquium will inquire into the meaning of *war*. When are we justified in asserting that a war is being fought? Was the recent Persian Gulf War essentially the same kind of event as World War II? Do the various definitions of war have implicit within them particular *causal* approaches? Finally, having prepared a position from which they can undertake analysis and evaluation, students will read, discuss and evaluate several well known books and essays on the causes of war.

Readings in the course will include:

A. Causation: Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Hume's *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and *Treatise of Human Nature*, and Hospers's *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*.

B. War: Quincy Wright's *A Study of War*.

C. Selected Writings on the Causes of War: Waltz's *Man, the State and War*, Schumpeter's *Imperialism*, Freud's essay *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and Stoessinger's *Why Nations Go To War*.

Since this course is a colloquium, students are expected to carefully study each reading assignment and to be prepared to discuss it in class. Grades will be based on a mid-term paper (40%) on causation and the problems of defining war, and on a final paper (60%) analyzing the selected writings on the causes of war. The schedule of reading assignments and the deadlines for the essays will be distributed in class on separate announcements.